

11632.6.5

THE SEASONS. 7

CONSIDERED

As representing the different Periods of MAN'S
LIFE—as Evidences of the POWER, WISDOM,
and GOODNESS of GOD—and as Motives to
incite to PIETY and DEVOTION.

BY

JAMES MAXWELL,

POET IN PAISLEY.



PAISLEY:

Printed by JOHN NEILSON for the Author,

M.DCC.LXXXVI.

The P R E F A C E.

THE revolving Seasons afford many lessons of instruction to the serious and thinking part of mankind. They are strong proofs of the power, wisdom, and goodness of that God, who at first spoke them into being, and who still conducts their regular change. At the same time that they evidence the perfections of the Creator, they are not unfit emblems of human life, and in that light, in the present publication, I mean to consider them. SPRING, while it recalls to our mind the beginning of Time, when Nature sprung from the hands of its Maker, is a fair representation of Infancy and Youth; SUMMER may represent the period between Youth and mature Manhood; AUTUMN, or HARVEST, the Good Old Age; and WINTER, decried Old Age and Death.

THIS order of things appears natural to me; and that it will appear so to numbers, can hardly be doubted. The method indeed, in which I propose to treat the subject, may perhaps appear too religious to some: but if Religion teaches the science of Happiness; if it leads to Life and Immortality, can we be too officious in using every inducement to promote the love and practice of it? I will not say that the present age is worse than any other (for every age is bad enough); but I wish it may not be said, in after ages, that while we improved in taste, in arts and manufactures, we declined in religion. Religion can hurt no good purpose; while profligacy of manners, and a disregard to her sacred dictates, are the certain forerunners of a falling state. Still, however, I have reason to believe there are a number among us, who have a just sense and relish of true religion. To them any well-meant attempt to promote it, however weak, will not be unsavoury. To them, as to the honourable ones of the earth, I submit the plan; and may He who giveth seed-time and harvest, and who liberally supplieth the wants of all his creatures, make it useful to those into whose hands it may come.

It was thought best to publish them separately, and if this shall be approved of, as tending to the general good of mankind, the other Seasons will be published in course.

S P R I N G.

O GOD of Nature! universal LORD !
Who spake all things to being by thy word ;
Inspir'd thy creatures all to speak thy praise,
And tell of all thy wondrous works and ways —
Assist a Bard, the meanest of the race,
To lisp the wonders of thy sov'reign grace.
Thou, with a word, mad'st ev'ry thing appear ;
Fix'd, by decrees, the seasons of the year.
Wise were thy counsels ! vast were thy designs,
In ord'ring all the great celestial signs !
The sun to rule the day ; the moon the night ;
For signs and seasons, all in order right !

Now Winter's past, my Muse attempts to sing
The op'ning beauties of the lovely Spring ;
When SOL approaches ARIES, or the RAM,
By orders from the sov'reign great I AM !
Behold, the birds, reviv'd from Winter's storm,
Chirp forth and sing ; and ev'n the crawling worm
Creeps forth, tho' mute, to shew its Maker's praise ;
Yea, ev'ry living soul awakes, to raise
A grateful tribute to th' Almighty King,
Whose potent word restores the clearing Spring !
Thus ev'n the brute-creation, void of sense,
Acknowledge God, and speak his providence.
Let Atheists bold, who dare a God deny,
Hang down their heads before the Lord most high ;

If not, they shall ere long be forc'd to own
His justice infinite, his pow'r unknown !

But as the theme I now attempt to sing
Is that delightful season of the Spring ;
This prompts the Muse, with gratitude to raise
A sacred song to the Creator's praise.
Since birds and beasts, of ev'ry name and kind,
Rejoice when they the changing season find.
Yea, vegetables, though inanimate,
Their great Creator's praises celebrate ;
Though they no voice nor reason understand,
They shew the wonders of his mighty hand.

Now earth again resumes her verdant green,
And all the trees in lovely bud are seen —
Fair emblem this of first creation's birth,
When God at once created heav'n and earth :
First heav'n and earth, and then sun, moon and stars,
His wisdom and his goodness straight prepares,
Ere other creatures he had form'd on earth,
And ere to mankind he had given birth :
For, first he made the spacious sea and land,
And creatures form'd, by his creating-hand ;
Then man he made, with his own image blest,
Great king and sov'reign lord o'er all the rest.
And surely reason makes it now appear
It was at this sweet season of the year,
When all begins to flourish on the ground,
And promis'd harvest hastens all around.
For food to man he made the trees produce,
And grass and herbs made grow for brutal use.

Thus Goodness all-divine, for all prepar'd,
And nothing for his creatures use was spar'd,

While all obedient did before him stand,
Till man transgress'd, and brake his just command.
But, ah ! when man against the Lord rebell'd,
From paradise he quickly was expell'd,
And sent to plow th' uncultivated ground,
That for his sustenance food might be found.

Then did the plowman's arduous task begin ;
Soon did he taste the bitter fruits of sin.
But, O admire the goodness of the Lord,
That mankind was not finally abhor'd !
Banish'd for ever from his blissful face,
Instead whereof, how matchless was the grace,
A Saviour's promis'd in the sinner's place ! }
A Saviour ! — ah, who shall that Saviour be,
With pow'r and love sufficient to set free
The sinner, who is now condemn'd to die,
Most justly, by the Lord of life on high ?
In vain we ask one of th' angelic race
To stoop so low, and venture in our place.
No ! not a mind among the bless'd above,
Has either half the strength or half the love.
Who then must this Almighty Saviour be ?
No less than God's beloved Son is he !

The time to execute the sentence now
Drew near, when lo, the Son, with humble brow,
Bow'd to his Father, and thus meekly said,
On me, O Father, let the stroke be laid !
Let not thine anger on frail man now fall,
Lest Satan boast his vict'ry over all
'The race of mankind. How would he rejoice
To see thy works on earth, and man the only choice

Of all thy creatures there, by him thus marr'd,
 And from thy favour finally debarr'd?
 Is it not written in thy great decree,
 To do thy will is only joy to me?
 Therefore, thy right'ous precepts to fulfil,
 Father! I come to do thy holy will.
 And is it not in thy divine decree,
 A human body thou ordain'dst for me?
 And cheerfully that body I assume,
 To undergo the weight of mankind's doom,
 Whom Satan did from his allegiance draw,
 Though broke by him, repair'd by me thy law
 Shall fully be; and Satan then shall feel
 I'll bruise his head, though he may bruise my heel."

Thus spake the blessed Saviour of mankind
 Unto his Father, with submissive mind:
 To whom the Father graciously reply'd:
 " Son of my love, my will is satisfy'd.
 In thee I am well-pleased; thou shalt be
 The great Restorer of the breach to me:
 Thus shalt thou Satan's boasted pow'r controul,
 And thou shalt of the travail of thy soul
 Behold, and fully satisfied shall be
 To see thy ransom'd seed from Satan's pow'r set free."

So answer'd God the Father to the Son,
 And what he promis'd, punctually was done:
 Yet would he not revoke the sentence past,
 That man should mortal be, and should be cast
 Out of that garden, where he first was plac'd,
 Because he did the fruit forbidden taste.
 Thus our first parents were at once expell'd
 From paradise, which they in tenure held

On their obedience ; now the ground to till,
 From whence they sprung, obedient to his will.
 So to this day mankind is forc'd to plow,
 And earn their bread with toil and sweat of brow,
 Till they by death to earth descend again ;
 A life of labour, mixt with grief and pain.
 Thus CAIN a tiller of the ground was made,
 ABEL a shepherd, and the flocks he fed,
 'Till wicked CAIN, unmerciful and rude,
 His cruel hands in ABEL's blood embru'd.
 But CAIN surviv'd to plow the fruitless ground,
 And for his labour little produce found ;
 Because his brother's blood against him cry'd,
 And God the blessing to his field deny'd.
 Yea, and instead of blessing, sent a curse,
 Which fill'd his soul with horror and remorse,
 So that his labour prov'd of little use ;
 Thistles and thorns the ground did him produce,
 Instead of wheat or barley and such grain ;
 He only plow'd and sow'd the land in vain.

Thus may we see whence troubles first began ;
 'Twas sin intrall'd the fallen race of man :
 But, O what cause have we to praise the Lord,
 Who fruitful seasons doth to us afford !
 To us, the offspring of that rebel pair,
 Who first transgress'd, and thus expelled were
 From paradise, to till the ground with pain,
 In hopes of bread, frail nature to sustain.
 Now man goes forth to plow and sow the field,
 Which doth to him abundant produce yield,
 Although the curse, which was on man entail'd,
 And on his seed, has never been repeal'd ;

Yet mercy hath so sweetly interpos'd,
 We are not all with wants and woes inclos'd ;
 An undeserved blessing God bestows
 On us ; although we are his rebel foes.
 Though man is forc'd to labour, plow and sow,
 And earn his bread with toil while here below,
 Yet is his labour not entirely vain,
 But God in mercy well rewards his pain :
 When we put trust in his kind providence,
 He grants to us a good inheritance :
 Yea, many times, though man be void of fear,
 He makes our earth a fruitful harvest bear,
 Not for the sake of him that plows and sows,
 Who may be to him and his people foes,
 But for the sake of those who fear his name,
 Through Christ, his blessing he bestows on them ;
 Although the husbandman sometimes believes,
 All is for his own good that he receives.
 But love and hatred are not thus made known,
 For God sometimes deals hardest with his own,
 And to the last the best for them reserves ;
 Yet ne'er forgets one who him truly serves.

Now rich and poor may hence a lesson learn,
 And should make this a matter of concern,
 Whether their wealth or poverty is sent,
 Sickness or health, for good or ill intent.
 If wealth and honours you on earth enjoy,
 With thankfulness then chearfully employ
 All that is lent in honour of his name,
 Whose bounteous hand bestow'd on you the same :
 Then surely you may thankfully conclude,
 These things were sent you for a present good,

As pledges of your heav'nly Father's love,
 And earneſts of much better things above.
 If poverty or ſickneſs is your lot,
 And ye with patience bear, and murmur not ;
 You may be ſure, and thankfully conclude,
 This lot was alſo ſent you for your good ;
 But if you fret, or murmur, or repine
 Againſt the hand of Providence divine,
 You may be ſure this lot doth nowiſe prove
 A token of your heav'nly Father's love.

Now let us meditate on Spring a while,
 And ſee how nature round us ſeems to ſmile ;
 See how the vegetable things declare,
 And mutely ſhew God's praises ev'ry where ;
 Nature, inanimate, proclaims his praise,
 And earth and ſea combine the ſong to raise,
 The very trees rejoice, rejoice and ſing,
 And woods re-echo with the gladsome Spring ;
 Mountains and hills, and vallies, all combine
 To ſhew the hand that made them is divine —
 The grass, the herbs, and ev'ry pleasant flow'r,
 Declare a God omnipotent in pow'r ;
 While all the brute creation join to raise
 The gen'ral ſong in his eternal praise —
 While fountains, rivers, floods, and foaming ſeaſ,
 His providence proclaim, and wiſe decrees.
 The very insects, in the Spring, revive
 And praise the Pow'r that makes them all alive —
 Yea, all the tribes, irrational, thus join
 To raise a hymn to ſov'reign Pow'r divine ;
 And ſhall the tribes of ADAM ceafe to raise
 A grateful anthem to their Maker's praise ?

Th' angelic hosts incessantly proclaim
 The honours of their great Creator's name—
 Shall man, ungrateful man, be dumb alone
 To sing the honours of the great Three One ?
 Forbid it, Lord ! nor let it e'er be said
 Of him, whom thou the sovereign lord hast made
 Of all this spacious world's created race,
 And high partaker of thy boundless grace !
 Shall he, the object of thy special love,
 The most ungrateful of thy creatures prove ?
 He ! for whose sake thy Son came down to die,
 And suffer griefs, to raise him up on high,
 Prove more ungrateful than the brutal throng,
 That cheerful join the universal song ;
 The very devils then will us upbraid,
 If this of man, in truth, can e'er be said.
 Surely this thought should melt his frozen heart,
 And make him homage due to thee impart.
 If any thing a thinking heart can melt,
 It must be this, what man's Redeemer felt.
 But, ah ! more stupid than the rocks and stones,
 Man's heart is deaf to all his cries and groans.
 O dire reproach upon the human race,
 To be unmov'd with such transcendent grace !
 Yet notwithstanding, Lord, thy pow'r can move
 And melt the most obdurate heart to love.
 When faithless PETER thrice his LORD deny'd,
 And had, with oaths and imprecations cry'd,
 I know him not ! yet when his injur'd Lord
 Did but to him a melting look afford,
 A flood of tears his very soul o'erflow'd,
 Soon as his Lord that look on him bestow'd.

Then he a champion for his Lord became,
 And never more deny'd his Master's name.
 His unbelief was cur'd by pow'r divine,
 Then did his faith with heav'nly lustre shine,
 So that he dy'd a martyr for the cause,
 And, as his Master, crucify'd he was ;
 Only this diff'rence, he with downward head,
 Chus'd for his Master humbly thus to bleed ;
 Because he thought himself unworthy here,
 To die in posture like his Master dear :
 Therefore, with downward head, behold, he dy'd,
 Because he had the Lord of life deny'd.

Hence may we see the pow'r of sov'reign grace,
 When it is pour'd upon the human race ; -
 It makes the stubborn pliant, tim'rous brave,
 The cruel tender, and redeems the slave ;
 The most obdurate heart it makes relent,
 And ev'n the chief of sinners to repent.

O let not any then, with harden'd heart,
 Think that he never with his lusts can part,
 Or that the Lord will ne'er his grace exert ; }
 Let no such thought take place within your mind,
 But still remember, *He that seeks, shall find* :
 For none, with contrite heart, e'er sought the Lord,
 But what he did to them his grace afford.
 Yea, all who seek him with a heart sincere,
 Though they have been involv'd in Satan's snare,
 They always find him gracious, good and kind,
 And unto mercy lib'rally inclin'd.

But now let all consider, old and young,
 Who are beginning, or who have been long

In Satan's service, let them now take care,
 And of his crafty counsels be aware ;
 For he'll persuade the youth, 'tis yet too soon
 To let their joyful sun go down ere noon ;
 'Tis time enough when youth, he'll say, is past,
 To think upon religion at the last.
 Then to the aged, who long time have been
 His willing subjects, and the slaves of sin—
 'Tis now too late for you to think of beav'n,
 Your sins are grown too great to be forgiv'n.

Thus leads he mankind still in wide extremes ;
 The youth he flatters with delusive dreams—
 Long life and pleasures which they may enjoy,
 And not their charming youthful days destroy.
 The aged, that it is too late to pray,
 For they have lost the blessing by delay.
 Let young and old this friendly warning take,
 And Satan's service presently forsake ;
 Especially let youth be now aware,
 Lest they be drawn into his fatal snare.

O lovely Youths ! appearing like the Spring,
 The aged Muse for you attempts to sing ;
 Hoping you will not his advice despise,
 Who fain would see you early good and wise.
 Remember now your great Creator high,
 Amidst the days of youthful vanity,
 Before the evil days, unseen, come on,
 Wherein you'll say, Where are my pleasures gone ?
 Think not that youth will long secure your breath,
 From the all-conqu'ring hand of potent death ;
 For though you should the word of truth deny,
 Yet daily observation cannot lie,

Which plainly shews how youth are snatch'd away,
 Before the frail and aged, day by day ;
 Yea, more in youth drop off the mortal stage,
 Than are call'd off in an advanced age.
 Consider then, although in youthful days,
 This gives no room for negligent delays.
 O flatter not yourselves that you are young,
 And therefore life may be continued long ;
 You see what numbers are laid in the tomb,
 Ere to the age of twenty years they come :
 For one who lives to twenty years of age,
 Perhaps there's ten by death call'd off the stage.
 This observation has been often made,
 How quickly youth are mingled with the dead,
 O that it may induce our tender youth,
 To listen to the precious words of truth !
 Let not your childhood run to waste, I pray,
 But now improve the season while you may.
 Let this engage you early to begin
 And think upon the danger you are in :
 When one dies near you, let your mind be fixt,
 To think, Who knows but I may be the next ?
 What accidents may call you off the stage,
 While youthful vanities your minds engage !
 On ev'ry side, behold, your danger lies,
 Death ready stands to strike you with surprize.

Beware of what temptations round you wait,
 To draw you in to take the gilded bait :
 Your young companions, who are set on vice,
 How readily will they your mind entice ;
 To ev'ry thing that's ill your feet they'll draw,
 Regardless of their Maker's holy law ;

To swear, to lie, to break the Sabbath-day,
Yea, rob and steal your neighbour's goods away.

Now, such companions if you do not shun,
You are in danger to be soon undone.

If you but yield to them, for once or twice,
You soon will be addicted unto vice;

If once with little crimes you have comply'd,
The most audacious won't be long deny'd.

At little crimes perhaps you first will start,
But, when committed, you will find your heart
Inclin'd the same, and greater to repeat,
Till you no sin account for you too great.

Such is the nature of bewitching sin,
Whene'er youth entangl'd are therein,
O then beware, and do not this forget !

Or you by sin will soon be overset.

Honour your parents, and your Maker fear,
And what he hath forbidden, pray forbear.
If thus you live, you need not be afraid,
Though you in youth should in the grave be laid.

But if those duties you in youth neglect,
What can you at the hand of God expect,
But certain fearful looking for of wrath,
Soon'as you are call'd off this stage by death ?
O did you know the danger you are in,
When you at once a sinful course begin,
You surely would consider of your way,
And not so easily be led astray !

But if no friendly warning you will take,
Till you drop into hell's infernal lake,
How will you curse yourselves for wretched fools,
When you despised Wisdom's choicest rules ?

Then will it be too late, and quite in vain,
 To wish you had your precious time again.
 There's no recov'ry! no remission there,
 But everlasting mis'ry and despair!
 O dreadful thought! though seldom thought upon
 By heedless youth, in haste to be undone!

O that I could persuade you, ere too late,
 Now to consider of your mortal state!
 And of the consequences after death,
 Soon as you have resign'd your fleeting breath.
 May God convince you by his mighty pow'r,
 And save you from the dread impending hour!
 Beware of Satan, and his crafty wiles,
 Who many young ones with his lies beguiles:
 For unexperienc'd youths too often hear
 His pleasing falsehoods, with attentive ear,
 Till they are caught in his deceitful gin,
 And dire perdition they are plunged in.

O fatal error! thus did he deceive,
 With his fallacious lies, our mother EVE;
 And thus would he her whole succeeding race
 O'erthrew, were they not kept by sov'reign grace:
 But God be prais'd, who limits still his pow'r,
 Or surely he would all mankind devour.
 Though he succeeded in his cursed plan,
 First to seduce the new-made creature man—
 Upon whose standing, and upon whose fall,
 Depended life and death unto us all;
 And though the fiend, to make him fall, prevail'd,
 Yet to the full extent his purpose fail'd:
 In vain he thought the whole to overthrow,
 Heav'n intercepted his intended blow,

And made it bruise his own accursed head,
Though he the heel bruis'd of the promis'd seed.
O wisdom infinite ! O pow'r divine !
Goodness immense, O Lord, and grace are thine !

Now when we meditate upon the Spring,
How all the birds their Maker's praises sing ;
Let us, the human, and the chosen race,
For ever praise the riches of his grace,
Who hath made us, of all on earth below,
The special influence of his grace to know.
Nor only so, but when we had transgreſſ'd
His holy law, not broken by the rest,
And when no creature could that breach repair,
But all mankind must sink in dire despair,
Unless the Son of God stoop from on high,
Assume our nature, yea, and bleed and die :
None other could the black offence atone,
Nor justice satisfy what man had done :
Yet this, ev'n this for us was freely giv'n,
To turn away the wrath denounc'd from heav'n.
Amazing condescension ! matchless grace !
Th' offended party takes th' offender's place !
If this will not melt down the heart of man,
Then surely in this world nought ever can.
What farther arguments need any use,
If mankind will such matchless love abuse ?
No ! further arguments will ne'er be felt ;
Nothing but lov'reign grace man's heart can melt.
What can the Preacher or the Poet do,
Since arguments will not man's will subdue ?
Threat'nings and promises are all in vain,
To melt his heart, or his affections gain.

Then must we leave them till th' Almighty Lord.
 Speak to their hearts the all-convincing word.
 Meantime, let us not weary still to pray,
 That God his mighty pow'r may yet display,
 To melt the sinner's heart by grace divine,
 And make his love with heav'nly lustre shine.

But let us ne'er neglect to press and warn
 The thoughtless souls to mind their great concern ;
 Nor let us ever faint, succeed or not,
 The faithful servant shall not be forgot,
 Nor shall he want a full and kind reward,
 Though here at present he meet no regard.
 Our Lord's disciples toil'd with all their might,
 And nothing caught the whole long dreary night,
 Yet when their Master, in the morning came,
 And spake a clearing word, to comfort them,
 Bade them the net from off the starboard cast,
 And they should prove successful at the last :
 Well, this they did, and lo, th' entangling net
 So many caught, as them almost o'erset.

Hence let not any of success despair,
 But still with faith and patience persevere ;
 And on the grace of God let all depend,
 Who would expect r' obtain a happy end.
 Let sinners hear the terrors of the law,
 Which struck the hearts of Isra'l's sons with awe ;
 And think if they were with such terror struck,
 By him who did the law to them conduct,
 Of how much sorer punishment shall they
 Be worthy, who regardless disobey
 The gospel call, and turn their ears away

From that transcendent, soul-reviving sound,
And still afresh the Lord of glory wound?
His patience now but aggravates their doom,
Which will at last their flatt'ring hopes consume,
And make them end at last in black despair,
When not one can the fatal loss repair.

Lord, grant thy blessing may these lines attend,
And ev'ry mean to gain the blissful end
Of saving sinners from the tempter's wiles,
Whose craft so many of our race beguiles;
But thy almighty pow'r, and sov'reign grace,
Can him and all his policy deface.

A HYMN ON SPRING.

1 **G**REAT GOD, thy wond'rous works and ways,
 Thy num'rous creatures sing,
 And shout aloud their Maker's praise,
 With each returning Spring.

2 The Winter's past ; the storms are gone ;
 The sun revives the earth :
 Thy creatures speak thy praise each one,
 With sweet harmonious mirth.

3 When through the tuneful wood we rove,
 How pleasant 'tis to hear
 The Black-bird, Thrush, and Turtle-Dove,
 Delight our ravish'd ear.

4 Yea, all the feather'd folk rejoice,
 At sweet returning Spring ;
 And creatures too, depriv'd of voice,
 Their Maker's praises sing.

5 Though these nor sense nor voice enjoy,
 Yet do they all declare
 The praises of the Lord most high,
 From whom their beings are.

6 O then shall man, ungrateful man,
 Be silent in his praise !
 He who below should lead the van,
 With reason's choicest lays !

7 Shall he, of all thy creatures, Lord,
 'The most ungrateful prove,
 To whom thou dost such gifts afford,
 And tokens of thy love?

8 Nay, he for whom thy Son came down,
 To suffer, bleed and die,
 That he might wear a heav'ly crown
 To all eternity!

9 Forbid it, Lord! that this should be
 Of us thy creatures said,
 That so ungratefully should we
 In Satan's footsteps tread.

10 O send thy sweet celestial Dove,
 With his enliv'ning pow'rs,
 To kindle flames of sacred love
 In these dead hearts of ours.

11 Then shall we, like the birds in Spring,
 Our cheerful voices try;
 And with more grateful hearts shall sing
 Thy praise, O Lord Most High!

12 Yea, we with heart as well as tongue,
 Harmonious notes shall raise,
 And join the universal song
 In thy eternal praise.



